

Art Notes

The Left is adroitly adapting its Agitprop operations to the Age of Pop and Camp. Most striking in recent years, of course, has been the use of "folk" music to service the ideological lusts of a largely undergraduate clientele. Now, and suddenly, the Left is making a considerable musical play to a younger and larger audience as well. A mutation known as "folk rock" is syncopating the Message to the insistent throbs of Rock'n'Roll—and selling like hot cakes to the presumptively unideological teen-age masses. "The Eve of Destruction," a clammy anti-war pot-boiler with lyrics like "You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'," has been outselling all other records for weeks, and scads of similar efforts are close behind.

The use of cinema as a propaganda form, on the other hand, is nothing new to American ideologues. The ugly memories of the soft-on-Stalin *Mission to Moscow* and of the Hollywood Ten have not quite been eradicated.

But, for the past ten or fifteen years the Left's Hollywood propaganda has been submerged and often only peripheral; mass preaching of the Communism-ain't-it-wonderful type has, for the most part, been Out, Out, that is, until recently, when a film called *China!* surfaced at neighborhood theaters along many byways of the republic. Produced by a left-wing cinematic impresario named Felix Greene, *China!* is a slick encomium to the People's Paradise and a palpable kick in the coffin to the millions who

have been murdered within its bamboo walls. More important, it reached a mass audience and, judging from the length of its run, is a box-office success. Now, and perhaps even more outrageously, *To Die in Madrid* has gallivanted into local outlets, reviving on its merry way every discredited interpretation and slanted myth about that venerable occasion for Leftist distortions known as the Spanish Civil War. *Newsweek* recently took time out from its sifting of fact from opinion to wax eloquent on the film's theme: "Hitler's finest . . . move mercilessly against innocent villages and ragtag irregulars in *alpargatas*, all in the name of Spain and practice. 'An army against a people,' said United States Ambassador Claude Bowers. The people had an army, too, a determined army, but Franco's army had determination and allies . . . *To Die in Madrid* is a valuable film that should be shown widely in schools as well as in theaters. . . ." Gone with the leftist wind are the Soviet cadres, the GPU-controlled International Brigades and the terror against Church and peasantry. (An editor's note at the end of a rave review in the September 21 *Worker* says: Tickets to this film are now on sale for \$2 at the *Worker* office.")

While this sort of thing cannot be taken seriously on an intellectual level (historians, Liberal as well as conservative, long ago straightened the record), its appearance in a mass market is disturbing. What it means is that for the first time in a long while, the hard American Left is getting access to the innocent. The size of the breakthrough should heighten our awareness that innocence about Communism is a luxury at least 48 years out of date.

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